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Four Vermont High Schools Awarded Public Outreach Grant **Teams will work together to build understanding of education redesign**

BARRE – Four high schools in Vermont were awarded grants from the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) to help build public understanding and support for the [Act 77 Legislation](#) of 2013 designed to provide students with multiple pathways to graduation, the Agency announced today.

The four schools are: **Otter Valley Union High School** in Brandon; **Twinfield Union School** in Plainfield; **Champlain Valley Union High School** in Hinesburg; and **Colchester High School** in Colchester.

“We are delighted to have the opportunity to work with these schools to ensure that communities across Vermont fully understand the implications of the legislation. In an era of unprecedented societal change, our best shot at creating a prosperous future for Vermont and our students is to remodel our educational delivery system to meet their needs,” said Deputy Secretary John Fischer. “We need to spread that message far and wide.”

Act 77 encourages all schools in Vermont to offer “Flexible Pathways” to high school graduation, which includes both traditional and non-traditional learning. For example, students are able to get credit for internships and other workplace-based experiences. Act 77 also supports dual enrollment in high school and college courses, as well as virtual (online and video) and blended learning experiences.

The Personalized Learning Plan requirements of Act 77 will help students achieve academic success, be prepared for post-secondary opportunities, and engage actively in civic life. Schools must ensure that they have designed a PLP process for implementation beginning in the fall of 2015. Schools will be expected to work with students to identify their goals, learning styles, and abilities and align this with the school's academic expectations and student's pathway toward graduation.

As part of the grant, the four schools will gather several times over the next academic year to learn a host of skills related to building public understanding of educational redesign and deep engagement. These include: strategic framing, an approach to communications that draws on how people make sense of public issues; dialogue for change strategies to help educators lead conversations in their communities about school redesign; and strategies for building youth-adult partnerships for engaging their peers in the change process.

Participants will also engage in a robust online platform and in authentic school-based projects that will advance the public conversation about student-centered learning in their communities. The experience will culminate in a statewide exhibition of learning.

Facilitators of the Agency effort, called the UPstitute, include:

Helen Beattie, Executive Director of [UP for Learning](#), an organization based in East Hardwick that specializes in building healthy school cultures and strong youth-adult partnerships in middle and high schools across Vermont.

Jane Feinberg, Founder and Principal of [Full Frame Communications](#), a national consulting firm based in Massachusetts that specializes in strategic communications and issue framing.

Daniel Baron, CEO of the [School Project Foundation](#), and a nationally recognized expert in collaborative leadership and facilitation.

The Bay and Paul Foundations and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation have provided additional funding for the yearlong project.

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